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2003 Vegetable Season: Cooler than normal temperatures, occasional heavy rains, and cloudy skies exerted heavy disease pressure on many vegetable crops. The spring planting started out normal with adequate temperatures and topsoil moisture. After late spring, rainy days and cloudy skies prevented much needed heat units for vegetable development. In some area, planting and harvesting schedules were interrupted by frequent rains. Various disease, mildew, and other weather related problems occurred in many fields, especially pumpkin fields. Yield per acre of cabbage, collards, escarole and endive, leaf and Romaine lettuce, winter squash, and sweet corn were down significantly due to wet and cool conditions. Overall, prices showed a 4 percent increase, though some of the vegetable crops had large decreases in the season average price from 2002.

Vegetables for Fresh Market: There are 17 fresh market vegetables in the New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service estimating program. Area harvested for these fresh market vegetables in 2003 totaled 33,400 acres, compared with 36,200 acres in 2002; down 2,800 acres. Production amounted to 4.74 million hundredweight, a decrease of 16 percent from the 5.64 million hundredweight produced in 2002. Overall yield in 2003 averaged 142 hundredweight per acre, down 14 hundredweight from the previous year. Season average price was \$26.50 per hundredweight compared with \$25.40 in 2002, up \$1.10 per hundredweight.

Among the fresh market vegetables, only spinach had higher harvested acres in 2003 than in 2002. Asparagus, cucumber, escarole & endive, kale, leaf and Romaine lettuce, and pumpkins acres remained the same, while the remaining vegetable acres declined. The higher season average price for some of the vegetable crops was not enough to offset the decrease of production, so value of production decreased \$18 million from 2002 to a total of \$125 million.

Ranking New Jersey's fresh market vegetables by value of production, Jersey Fresh tomatoes ranked first with \$28 million, and bell peppers ranked second with \$25.6 million. Sweet corn, cucumbers, and summer squash were third, fourth, and fifth, with \$12.1 million, \$12 million, and \$7.68 million, respectively.

Vegetables for Processing: Harvested acreage in 2003 of the eight major processing vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, green peas, lima beans, snap beans, spinach, sweet corn, and tomatoes) totaled 7,000 acres, compared with 11,600 acres in 2002. Total production, at 52.5 thousand tons, was a 29 percent decrease from 73.6 thousand tons in 2002. The season average price was \$115.90 per ton, compared with \$124.30 per ton in 2002; down \$8.40. The 2003 value of production at \$6.08 million was down 34 percent from \$9.15 million in 2002.

A special thank you goes out to all New Jersey vegetable producers who participated in the surveys that made this publication possible for everyone.



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